Your evidence tries to account for Derrida, but your case and speech act ultimately fail. Your attempt to systematize, describe and identify the gift within the gift economy of organ donation in death forecloses on and eliminates the gift. You remove the impossibility of the gift even in the vague attempt at description rather than utilizing silence. This turns case and creates competition for the alternative.

First, you designate something as a gift. By naming the gift you destroy it; even, if the person giving cannot do the describing. Derrida[[1]](#footnote-1) Before we go on to other points, I will try to speak as if there were no supposed knowledge of texts behind the discussion, in order to make things as clear as possible. I refer to what you just recalled. I am not convinced that between the use of Gegebenheit in phenomenology and the problem we're about to discuss, that is, the gift, there is a semantic continuity. I am not sure that when, of course, Husserl refers, extensively and constantly, to what is given to intuition, this given-ness, this Gegebenheit has an obvious and intelligible relationship to the gift, to being given as a gift. What we are going to discuss, that is the gift, perhaps is not homogenous with Gegebenheit. That is one of the problems with the connection to phenomenology. will come back to this later on. Now, the way, the mediation or the transition, you made between Gegebenheit in phenomenology and the es gibt in Heidegger is also problematic to me. The way Heidegger refers to the Gabe in the es gibt is distinct from intuitive Gegebenheit. When Husserl says Gegebenheit, and when phenomenologists in the broad sense say Gegebenheit, something is given, they refer simply to the passivity of intuition. Something is there. We have, we meet something. It is there, but it is not a gift. So, one of my first questions would be, **Are we authorized to go directly from the phenomenological concept of** Gegebenheit, **given-ness, to the problem of the gift** that we are about to discuss? Now, what will make the discussion interesting and difficult at the same time, and I hope endless, has to do, not with this disagreement between us, but with a sort of chiasmus. Etant donné is a powerful book with a beautiful title. Jean-Luc Marion has a genius for titles. Dieu sans l’être was a tour de force as a title. I am not sure that the English translation God without Being does justice to what I find very interesting in the title, that is, not only God “without Being" but also God “without being God.” Here we address the question of the name, of the name God. We will come upon this question again along our way. Donum dei. I will come back to this question. I am in­ terested in Christian theology, of course, although I am totally incompetent. But I know that is the point that we are going to discuss. What is in a name? We are going to discuss the name gift and the name God. And we started to do this last night. What is the chiasmus, if I try to summarize it after having read this powerful book, within the title, which is more easily translated into English, Being Given? Is that correct? Etant donné: I want to praise what is beautiful in this title: Being as Being Given. I came here to praise Jean-Luc Marion s genius. But then he wants to free the gift and givenness from being, in a way. We will come back to this. The chiasmus that I found in this book would be this, schematically summarized: Jean-Luc summarized in a very fair way what I said about the gift in Given Time, about all the aporias, the impossibilities. **As soon as a gift**—not a Gegebenheit, but a gift—as soon as a gift **is identified as a gift, with the meaning of a gift, then it is canceled as a gift. It is reintroduced into the circle of an exchange and destroyed as a gift.** **As soon as the donee knows it is a gift, he already thanks the donator, and cancels the gift. As soon as the donator is conscious of giving, he himself thanks himself and** again **cancels the gift by re-inscribing it into a** circle, an **economic circle.** So I want to reconstitute my text here and insist on what looks like an impossibility: **for the gift** **to** appear as such while **remain**ing **a gift**, to appear as such on the side of the donator and on the side of the donee, the receiver, and the impossibility for a gift to be present, to be a being as being present. So **I dissociate the gift from the present.** Jean-Luc in a very fair way reconstituted this demonstration, but then he says that all these alleged objections or obstacles that I am sup­ posed to have built against the gift, far from blocking the way, so to speak, far from preventing us from having access to the gift or a phenomenology of the gift, in fact, are a sort of springboard for what you try to do as a phenomen- ologist

The implication is that the gift if it is to be a gift cannot be theoretically identified as such. You cannot say that X is an instance of gift economy because to identify the gift is to foreclose. Derrida (2):[[2]](#footnote-2) So, up to that point, we agree. Where we disagree, if we do disagree, is that after this stage, Jean-Luc says that I have problematized the gift in the horizon of economy, of ontology and economy, in the circle of exchange, the way Marcel Mauss has done, and we have to free the gift from this horizon of exchange and economy. Here, of course, I would disagree. Î did exactly the opposite. **I tried to** precisely **displace the problematic of the gift, to take it out of the circle of economy**, of exchange, **but not to conclude, from the impossibility for the gift to appear as such** and to be determined as such, **to its absolute impossibility.** I said, to be very schematic and brief, that it is impossible for the gift to appear as such. So **the gift does not exist** as such, **if by existence we understand being present and intuitively identified** as such. **So the gift does not exist and appear** as such; it is impossible for the gift to exist and appear as such. **But I never concluded that there is no gift**. I went on to say that **if there is a gift**, through this impossibility, **it must be the experience of this impossibil­ ity, and it should appear as impossible.** **The** event called **gift is totally hetero­ geneous to theoretical identification**, to phenomenological identification. That is a point of disagreement **The gift is totally foreign to the horizon of economy,** ontology, **knowledge,** constantive statements, **and theoretical deter­ mination** **and judgment.** But in doing so, I did not intend to simply give up the task of accounting for the gift, for what one calls gift, not only in economy but even in Christian discourse. In The Gift of Death, I try to show the economy at work, the economic axiomatic at work, in some Christian texts. So I try to account for this and to say that this so-called circle, this economic circle, in order to circulate, in order to be put in motion, must correspond to a move­ ment, a motion, a desire—whatever the name—a thought of the gift, which would not be exhausted by a phenomenological determination, by a theoreti­ cal determination, by a scientific determination, by an economy. I would like this discussion not to be disagreement, and not to be too easily consensual, of course, but not to be polemical. I would like us to try to find some new opening. I would suggest that what this question of the gift compels us to do, perhaps, is to re-activate, while displacing, the famous distinction that Kant . made between knowing and thinking, for instance. **The gift,** I would claim, I would argue, as such **cannot be known; as soon as you know it, you destroy it.** So the gift as such is impossible. I insist on the "as such.” I will explain why in a moment. The gift as such cannot be known, but it can be thought of. We can think what we cannot know. Perhaps thinking is not the right word. But there is something in excess of knowledge. **We have a relation to the gift beyond** the circle, **the economic circle**, and beyond the theoretical and phenomenologi­ cal determination. It is this thinking, this excess, which interests me. It is this excess which puts the circle into motion. Why is there economy? Why is there exchange, in Marcel Mauss’s sense? Why are there return gifts with delay? Where does this circle come from? I never said—that is a misunderstanding which happens all the time in France —I never said that there is no gift. No, I said exactly the opposite. What are the conditions for us to say there is a gift, if we cannot determine it theoretically, phenomenologically? It is through the experience of the impossibility; that its possibility is possible as impossible. I will come back to that.

Second, your attempt to endorse the general form of the gift has massive problems. First it locates the ethical in the general, not the specific so it runs afoul of the structure of responsibility. Second, your attempt to speak to this general obligation that at the least you and the judge have eliminate any ability for real responsibility. Derrida (3):[[3]](#footnote-3)

**The first effect** or first destination **of language** therefore **involves depriving me of**, or delivering me from, my **singularity. By suspending** my absolute **singularity** in speaking**, I renounce** at the same time **my liberty and** my **responsibility.** **Once I speak I am never** and no longer **myself, alone and unique.** **It is a** very **strange contract**—both paradoxical and terrifying—**that binds infinite responsibility to silence and secrecy.** It goes against what one usually thinks, even in the most philosophical mode. **For common sense**, just as for philosophical reasoning, the most widely shared belief is ha **responsibility is tied to the public** and to the nonsecret, to the possibility and even the necessity of accounting for one’s words and actions in front of others, of justifying and owning up to them. Here **on the contrary** it appears, just as necessarily, **that the absolute responsibility of my actions**, to the extent that such a responsibility **remains mine, singularly so**, **something no one else can perform** in my place instead implies secrecy. But what is also implied is that, by not speaking to others, I don’t account for my actions, that I answer for nothing [*que je ne reponde de rien*] and to no one, that I make no response to others or before others. It is both a scandal and a paradox. According to Kierkegaard ***ethical* exigency is regulated by generality**; **and** it **therefore defines a responsibility that consists of *speaking*,** that is, of involving oneself sufficiently in the generality to justify oneself, to give an account of one’s decision and to answer for one’s actions. On the other hand, what does Abraham teach us, in his approach to sacrifice? That **far from ensuring responsibility, the generality of ethics incites to irresponsibility. It impels me to** speak, to reply, to account for something, and thus to **dissolve my singularity in the medium of the concept**. Such is the aporia of responsibility: **one always risks not managing to accede to** the concept of **responsibility in the process of *forming* it. For responsibility** (we would not longer dare speak of “the universal concept of responsibility” **demands** on the one hand an accounting, a general answering-for-oneself with **respect to the general** and before the generality, hence the idea of substitution, **and, on the other hand** uniqueness, **absolute singularity, hence** non substitution, nonrepetition, **silence and secrecy.** What I am saying here about responsibility can also be said about decision. The ethical involves me in substation, as does speaking. Whence the insolence of the paradox: **for Abraham**, Kierkegaard declares, ***the ethical is a temptation***. **He must therefore resist it.** He keeps quiet in order to avoid the moral temptation which, under the pretext of calling him to responsibility, to **self-justification**, **would make him lose his** ultimate responsibility along with his singularity, make him lose his unjustifiable, secret, and **absolute responsibility before God.** This is ethics as “irresponsibilization,” as an insoluble and paradoxical contradiction between responsibility *in general* and *absolute* responsibility. **Absolute responsibility is n**ot a responsibility, at least it is not general responsibility or **responsibility in general. It needs to be exceptional** or extraordinary, and it needs to be that absolutely and par excellence: It is as if absolute responsibility could not be derived from a *concept* of responsibility and therefore, **in order for it to be what it must be it must remain** inconceivable, indeed **unthinkable**: it must therefore be irresponsible in order to be absolutely responsible. “Abraham *cannot* speak, because he cannot say that which would explain everything . . . that is an ordeal such that, please note, the ethical is the temptation” (115).

This will require rejection of the aff. It is only in the space of refusal of accounting that responsibility can exist in the space of aporia. Derrida (4)[[4]](#footnote-4) **The ethical** can therefore end up making us irresponsible. It **is a temptation**, a tendency, or a facility **that would sometimes have to be refused** **in the name of a responsibility that doesn’t** keep account or **give an account**, neither to man, to humans, to society, to one’s fellow, or to one’s own. **Such a responsibility** keeps its secret, it **cannot** and need not **present itself.** Tyrannically, jealously, **it refuses to present itself before the violence that consists of asking for accounts and justifications,** summonses to appear before the law of men. **It declines the autobiography that is always auto-justification,** *egodicy*. Abraham *presents himself,* of course, but before God, the unique, jealous, secret God, the one to whom he says “Here I am.” But in order to do that, he must renounce his family loyalties, which amounts to violating his oath, and refuse to present himself before men. He no longer speaks to them. **That at least is what the sacrifice of Isaac suggests** (it would be different for a tragic hero such as Agamemnon).

The alternative is to utilize the biblical motif of the God who sees in secret. Do the aff but without any conscious recognition of the act as a gift. Allow the God who sees in secret to exist as the recognition of the act but without our conscious recognition of the act as a gift. Only this picture finally repudiates the economy that reintenches allowing advancement within the aporia. Derrida 5[[5]](#footnote-5)

This promise is repeated several times in a similar form, whether it concerns alms, prayer, or fasting (6: 6, 17-18). **The clarity of divine lucidity penetrates everything** **yet keeps** within itself **the most secret of secrets.** **In order to eschew idolatrous** or iconistic **simplisms**, that is, visible images and ready-made representations, **it might be necessary to understand** this sentence (“and **they Father which seeth in secret . . . shall reward thee”**) **as** something **other than a proposition concerning God**, this subject, entity, or X who on the one hand would already exist, and who, on the other hand, what is more, would be endowed with attributes such as paternity and the power to penetrate secrets, to see the invisible, to see in me better than I, to be more powerful and more intimate with me than myself. **We should stop thinking about God as someone**, ,**over there,** way up there, transcendent, and, what is more—into the bargain, precisely—capable, more than any satellite orbiting in space, of seeing into the most secret of the most interior places. It is perhaps necessary, if we are to follow the traditional Judeo-Christiano-Islamic injunction, but also at the risk of turning it against that tradition, to think of God and of the name of God without such idolatrous stereotyping or representation. Then we might say: **God is the name of the possibility I have of keeping a secret that is visible from the interior but not from the exterior.** **Once such a structure** of conscience **exists**, of being with-oneself, of speaking, that is, of producing invisible sense, once **I have within me, *thanks to the invisible word as such,*  a witness that others cannot see, and who is therefore *at the same time other than me and more intimate with me than myself*,** once I can have a secret relationship with myself and not tell everything, **once there is secrecy and secret witnessing within me**, that what I call God exists (there is) what I call God in me, (it happens that) I call myself God—a phrase that is difficult to distinguish from “God calls me,” for it is on that condition that I can call myself or that I am called in secret. **God is in me, he is the** absolute “me” or “self,” he is that **structure of invisible interiority** that is called, in Kierkegaard’s sense, subjectivity. And he is made manifest, **he manifests his nonmanifestation when, in the structure of the living or the entity, there appears in the course of phylo- and ontogenetic history,** the possibility of secrecy, however differentiated, complex, plural, and overdetermined it be; **that is,** when **there appears** **the** desire and **power** to render absolutely invisible and **to constitute within oneself a witness of that invisibility.** That is the history of God and the name of God as the history of secrecy, **a history that is at the same time secret and without any secrets.** Such a history is also an economy. Another economy? Perhaps the same one in simulacrum, an economy that is ambiguous enough to seem to integrate noneconomy. **In its essential instability** the same economy seems sometimes faithful to and sometimes accusing or ironic with respect to the role of Christian sacrifice. **It begins by denouncing an offering that appears too calculating** still; **one that would renounce earthly**, finite, accountable, exterior, visible **wages** (*merces)*, one that would exceed an economy of retribution and exchange (the *re-mercient*) **only to capitalize on it by gaining a profit** or surplus value **that was infinite**, heavenly, incalculable, interior and secret. This would be a sort of secret calculation that would continue to wager on the gaze of God who sees the invisible and sees in my heart what I decline to have seen by my fellow humans.

This is obviously competitive with the aff. You cannot describe or identify the affirmative with the gift and also keep the gift in that state of secrecy that only the internal God who knows us better than ourselves can say.

1. On the Gift: A discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion. Moderated by Richard Kearney. Indiana University Conference on Philosophy of Religion. 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. On the Gift: A discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion. Moderated by Richard Kearney. Indiana University Conference on Philosophy of Religion. 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *The Gift of Death*. University of Chicago Press. 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *The Gift of Death*. University of Chicago Press. 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *The Gift of Death*. University of Chicago Press. 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)